Nov. 8, 2015,

Hi everybody!

Thank you very much for the feedback you’ve provided. I was surprised to see that people had lots and lots to say. It has replaced my frustration with an understanding of where many of you are and I’m grateful for that.

Many people reminded me it’s not about me and my class… that I must cast the class experience in the life of a student with may commitments and concerns … and particularly about grades. It’s the middle of week 7, people are… TIRED, damn it. There’s lots to do, and we need a high GPA, and readings aren’t graded. In our world where different classes compete for students’ attention using the grades as the carrot and the stick, I have to decide if I want to engage in that, or accept that students will do what they strategically find in their best interest. Most if my life, I’ve used grades to manipulate students to what I thought they should do. I say “manipulate” rather than “motivate” intentionally… It all seems rather wrong to me now. For now, I prefer allowing students to follow what they are interested in. The grade? Yes, I’ll still assess a grade based on the final and the projects. Am I conflicted about that as well? Yes, but more below.

The gross majority of the feedback expressed gratitude for the different insights that the class was bringing and that most students were making use of the opportunity this class presents in a way that makes sense to them.

Below are some comments that I will respond to afterwards and then there’s quotes at the end.

* Maybe I’m confining the class discussion too much?
* Feeling of lack of direction in the class and projects – what am I doing here?
* Study questions posted with the readings. There should be fewer readings, because the amount of time we have doesn’t allow full analysis.
* Class is great… students’ expectations is that they will be told what to do.
* Could we have more interactive activity? Nice the way class changes, but we are routine.
* “The reality of this pedagogy is that it takes quite some time to become effective, at least in my experience.”

Grades and Class Activity: Your project isn’t graded on “success”, but rather presentation of information about what you learned and what you can teach us. I understand some groups haven’t yet formed a bond with a partner “on the ground”. I request that you relate this frustration to the group. Some of you found yourself in conflict with me. I request that you report on what this is like. I’ll do my best to collaboratively report on what it is like for me.

Grades – I will provide more feedback on the websites to give you an idea of where your project stands. So far, I’m pleased with what people are doing... quantitatively, this corresponds to grades of between B+ and A so far. Again, much is to be determined with the final presentations and exam. The exam will give you an opportunity to express what you’ve learned in the class. There’s nothing specific you’ll have to tell me, dates, authors, etc. However, if given a question, say about the Syrian refugee dilemma or question of charity versus ecotourism versus educational collaboration, I expect you’ll have something to say about the causes, and what the experience of the people may be, and how we might engage. I expect you’ll express some ideas from the class. If you can say “Small is beautiful claims…” or “that tribe in the Amazon did this” that is even better… if you can throw names around: “Jeffrey Sachs would say this…” or “Paul Polak claims…” then that is great but not necessary. Hopefully, you’ll be able to relate some information to your project.

Class – we have lots of guest speakers coming. We may add activities if time allows. I will try my best to reduce the amount of time on the readings and allow time for you to work on your projects.

Appropriate Technology “is still my most interesting & stimulating, frustrating and challenging class”

“However, the whole idea of even having a project before experiencing a community personally is extremely frustrating.”.. and there should be two parts to this class with an international trip in between and the second part is the projects. …This class “has rekindled / re-made me aware of my passion for the serving-non-profit world.”

* So, how might we change the class with respect to the quote above. I’m open for ideas. Until then, maybe 391 is just the first of these two classes, and the rest of your life is the second?